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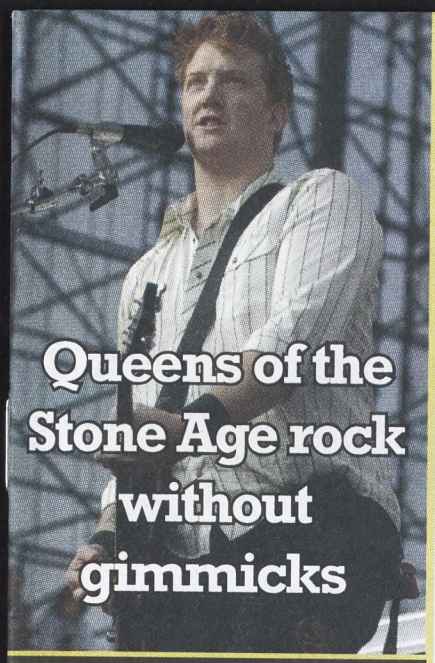
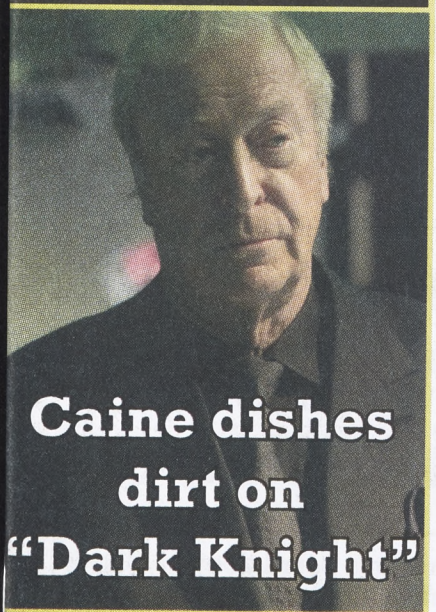


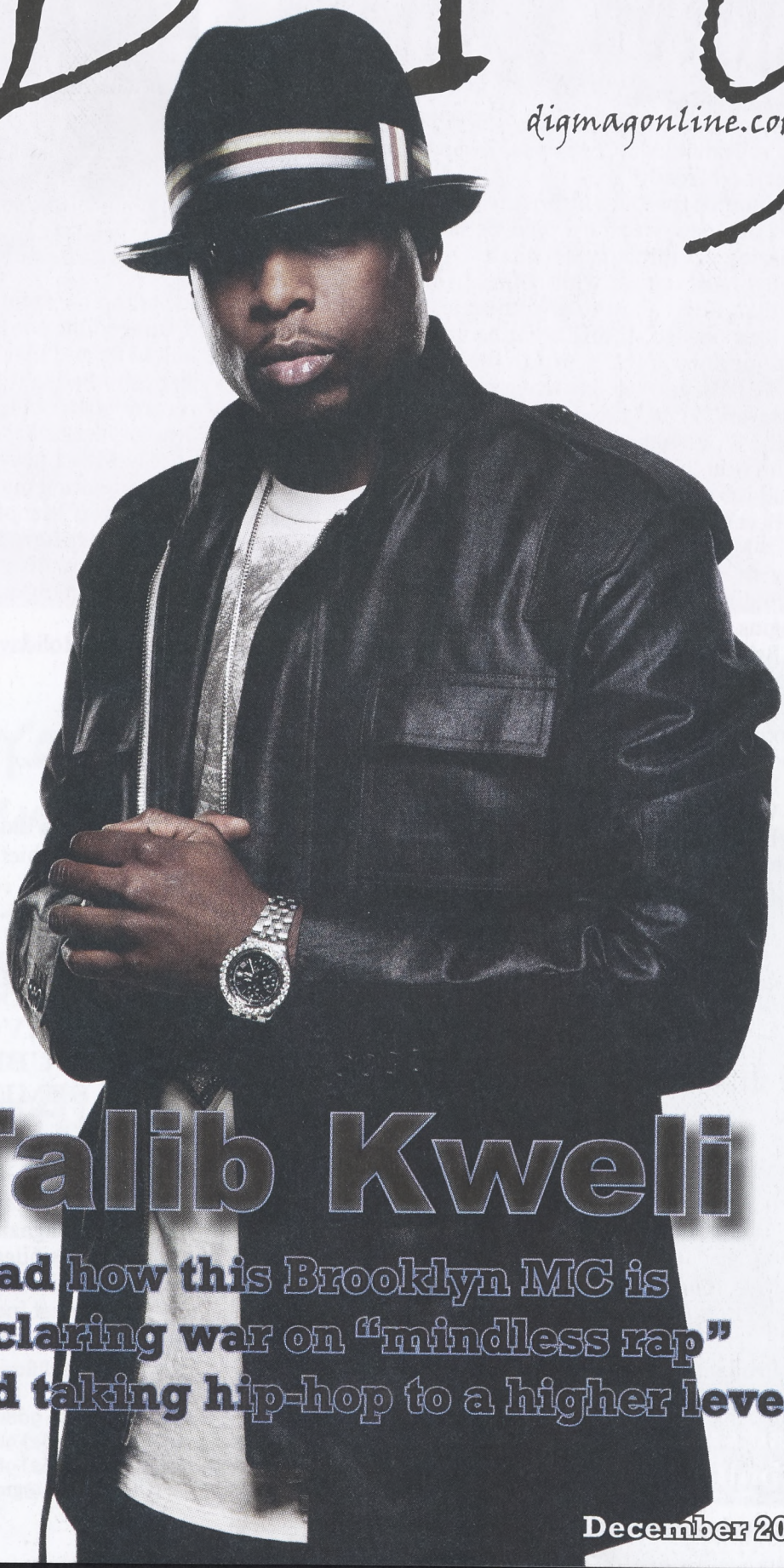
Queens of the Stone Age rock without gimmicks

Southern California trailer parks exposed



Caine dishes dirt on "Dark Knight"

Alumnus screenwriter talks tricks of the trade



Talib Kweli

Read how this Brooklyn MC is declaring war on "mindless rap" and taking hip-hop to a higher level.

December 2007

EDITOR'S LETTER

The winter season is officially here. It's time for finals, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and a new year. Everybody ready?

I jumped the gun a little early in the last issue by saying that our new website would be launched already. Our amazing art director Stephanie Cary has been working really hard on it with journalism professor Amara Aguilar, and I want to give them as much time to work on it as needed. It might not be up until next semester, but I promise it will be worth the wait.

We have another exciting issue for you. Two big music acts were excited to talk to us this month. It was a Queens of the Stone Age vs. Talib Kweli battle for the cover, but Talib won the vote around the office. Dale Johnson did a good job on that story.

Because of the website delay, we saved my interview with Michael Caine for this month's issue. The quirky British actor has been working on several projects including "The Dark Knight," the sequel to "Batman Begins," and was eager to talk about it.

Brigid McGuire investigated California's trailer parks, Jeanne Hart compiled the 49 oddest headlines of 2007, Adam Pringle interviewed Hollywood screenwriter and director David Twohy, who is also a CSULB alumnus, and Daniela Gutierrez wrote about her exciting travels to Berlin.

We did launch our "Now DIG This" series on our website last month. No One Goes Home played some songs acoustic from the couch here in our office, including an exclusive song that can only be found on digmagonline.com. For December, The Cab came by to talk to us and play some songs. That band is the newest signee to Fall Out Boy bassist Pete Wentz's Decaydance record label. Look for that in the middle of the month. Jessica Iavazzi has been doing a good job with those.

It is with a heavy heart that I have to say goodbye to our graduating managing editor, Brigid McGuire. Brigid was the very first person I met when I went into the *Daily Forty-Niner* newsroom as a young transfer student. She worked with me, encouraged me and made such a huge difference in my aspiring journalist career. We will really miss her.

Happy Holidays to everybody, and have a great break.

Matthew Wilkinson

Matthew Wilkinson
Editor in Chief

DIG

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LET THE DIG LEGEND LIVE ON. DON'T WAIT! GET INVOLVED IN THE PUBLICATION THIS SEMESTER. STOP BY SSPA 030.

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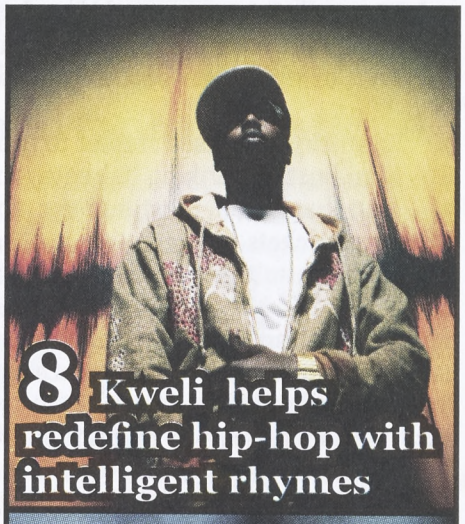


8 Kweli helps redefine hip-hop with intelligent rhymes

12 Queens front man Josh Homme has freedom on his mind

49 Things you've wanted to know about 2007

It's the end of another year and 2007 was filled with stories about war, the climate, politicians and Britney Spears. It is media tradition to review the year's top news, scandals and disasters, but instead of reminding you for the millionth time about celebrity drama, political fiascos, etc., we decided to bring you 2007's 49 oddest headlines from around the world. It has definitely been an interesting year. Enjoy!

Headlines compiled by Jeanne Hart

1. California man eats 103 hamburgers in eight minutes to win $10,000 dollars.
2. Condoleezza Rice drives halfway to airport before realizing she forgot interpreter.
3. Woman escapes from German detention center in a suitcase.
4. Man calls 911 to demand beer delivery.
5. Man gets probation for assault with pickles.
6. Man drinks seven bottles of alcohol in 15 minutes at Wal-Mart.
7. Kentucky man used stapler to rob shop.
8. Man busted drinking hairspray in department store.
9. Man hangs on to statue for six days for "Hannah Montana" tickets.
10. Substitute teacher disrobes in front of fourth-grade class.
11. Man in India marries dog as atonement.
12. Bono outbids everyone at charity auction for Bono-autographed guitar.
13. Man forgets car at gas station.
14. Students used cookies to torture.
15. In the U.K., it is illegal to die while in the houses of Parliament.
16. Crocodile "arrested" in Australia.
17. Man defecates in the middle of McDonalds.
18. Teenager in go-kart eludes seven German police cars.
19. Nude sleepwalkers set off alarm for hotel.
20. Bush jokes Cheney is "Darth Vader."
21. Hunter recovering after being shot by dog.
22. Cremation to be replaced by eco-friendly freeze-drying of corpses.
23. Russian cockroach gives birth after conceiving in space.
24. Parrot imitates fire alarm and saves family.
25. Army called in to save beer.
26. Elephants electrocuted in drunken rampage.
27. Police seek man after fight with sister in cat-shaving case.
28. Paris Hilton wants to be frozen with her pets.
29. Distracted priest pronounces couple "Man and Plumbing Problem."
30. Americans demand military response after Chinese shoot down DirecTV satellite.
31. Child-safety experts call for restrictions on childhood imagination.
32. Florida man beats out heart disease as nation's No. 1 killer.
33. "Jeopardy!" viewer had no idea he knew so much about weasels.
34. Father not letting firstborn repeat mistakes he made as nine-month-old.
35. Climatologists secure funding to breed glaciers in captivity.
36. High school student whines his way to 4.0 GPA.
37. Health department closes perfectly good burrito place.
38. Fabled Burger King employee places single onion ring in everyone's fries.
39. Arby's CEO arrested with trunk full of stolen horsey sauce.
40. Mel Brooks starts nonprofit foundation to save word "schmuck."
41. Child on White House tour momentarily seizes control of nation.
42. Headless goats and chickens found on U.S. beach.
43. S.D. man downs 5.5 ounces of hot sauce.
44. [Antonio] Banderas would like to be a woman...just for a day.
45. 87 snakes — and a Texan — in a tub!
46. Woman who registered dog to vote avoids jail.
47. Wayward emu visits Wal-Mart.
48. N.Y. man attacks inflatable ghosts, pumpkin.
49. Man impersonates road kill to get car help.

Photos by Brigid McGuire

Welcome to Welcome Lane (left). Airstreams have never been so fashionable (right).

Trailer parks worth hitching on to

Most people think of trailer parks as trashy homes for rednecks and meth labs, but just miles from the school are some parks that probably put your studio apartment to shame, and for half the price.

By Brigid McGuire

The ideal is that one day, we will all graduate college, maybe get married and then obtain the "American Dream": home ownership. Let's get real now. Unless we all marry or become doctors, houses will be way out of our price range. However, there is one place a savy 20-something could call home: a trailer park.

Seriously, they aren't as bad as our four-teeth-missing cousin Cletus says they are. There are many cool trailer parks right here in Southern California, and one of the coolest is just right down Pacific Coast Highway in Seal Beach. Just make a quick right on First Street and then turn on to Welcome Lane (seriously, that's the street name), and you'll be amazed.

According to an article in the *Orange County Register*, there are about 125 mobile homes in the park, which is only on a seven-acre plot of land. There's probably more space in the quad on the southern part of campus. The park is only two blocks from the beach, and I mean an actual beach! Sorry to break it to you, but Long Beach has no real beach, thanks to the break wall.

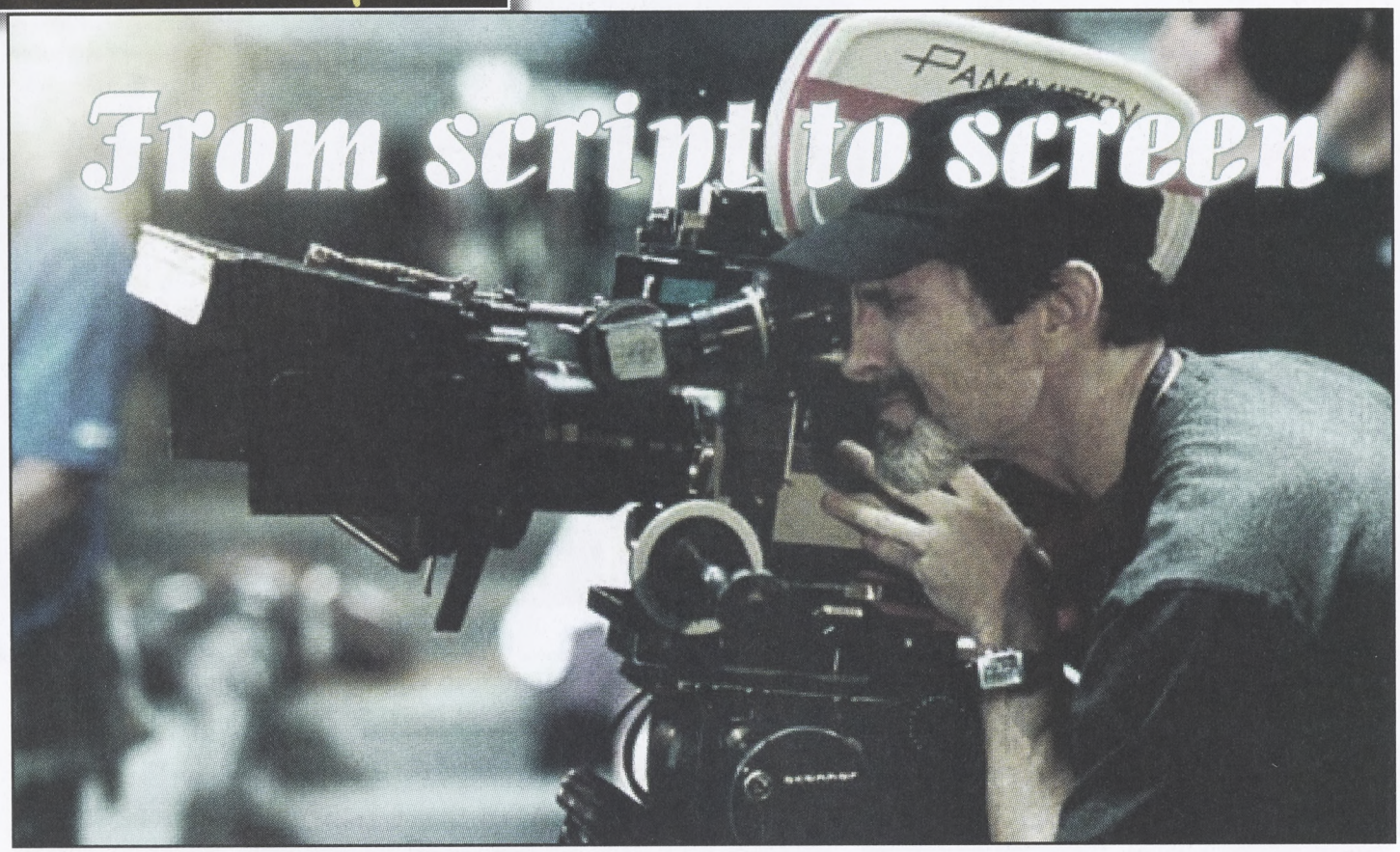
A few of the mobile homes are just your average unhitched sort, but there are a few that would put any high-class architecture to shame. Some of these bad boys are two stories, with the original mobile home underneath.

But not all trailer parks are as well-maintained as the one in Seal Beach. The *Los Angeles Times* wrote a large series of articles this past spring and summer about the Third World-type conditions of some trailer parks in the Coachella Valley. Being from the Coachella Valley myself, I had many friends who lived in parks not as extreme as the ones listed in the articles, but they weren't far off.

One of these dilapidated parks is located in Desert Hot Springs, where land is cheap and people dump their trash in the middle of the desert to avoid the dumping fees at the Riverside County dump. This place resembled an apocalyptic-type film, with abandoned refrigerators and stoves as far as the eye could see.

Overall, with most trailer parks in Long Beach charging between $359 and $400 in rent a month, and with the average apartment costing anywhere from $1000 to $1400 a month, living in a trailer park is starting to look more appealing everyday. Personally, after I graduate, I would rather live in a cardboard box than move back in with my parents, and if moving into affordable housing is the way to do it, then I am all for it.

We've all probably driven down PCH and passed the trailer parks in Huntington Beach and Newport Beach, and said to ourselves, "If that's where I have to live to be a block from the beach, so be it." So why not unhitch the trailer, lay out the Astroturf and watch the waves roll by?



From script to screen

Writer/director David Twohy discusses his journey from majoring in theater arts at Cal State Long Beach to penning big-budget films featuring the likes of Harrison Ford and Vin Diesel.

By Adam Pringle

Although you've probably never heard of David Twohy, chances are you've seen some of his handiwork: The writer/director has helped create a number of high-profile action and science fiction films over the last two decades, including "Pitch Black," "The Fugitive" and "The Arrival."

The Cal State Long Beach alumnus particularly specializes in writing and occasionally directing films about otherworldly situations such as alien encounters.

"They present a big canvas," Twohy said. "If you're doing something like 'The Fugitive,' you're sort of hamstrung by reality, for the most part. If you have a big imagination, then sometimes you want to bust out of those confines and paint on a bigger canvas, and you want to create worlds. Everyone wants to stretch their imagination at times. Science fiction allows me to do that."

Although Twohy says he tries to be a flashy and visually-oriented director, he describes himself as a "workman-like" writer who always tries to work consistently instead of just writing when the creative urge hits him.

"I get up and set office hours, and I do it whether the creativity is there or not," he said. "The difference between me, a professional writer, and a guy who's driving a taxicab, who has ideas, is that he can't get them down on paper. He can't execute his ideas well. That's why he's driving a taxi. There is a real discipline to being a screenwriter, and just about every successful screenwriter I know has that discipline."

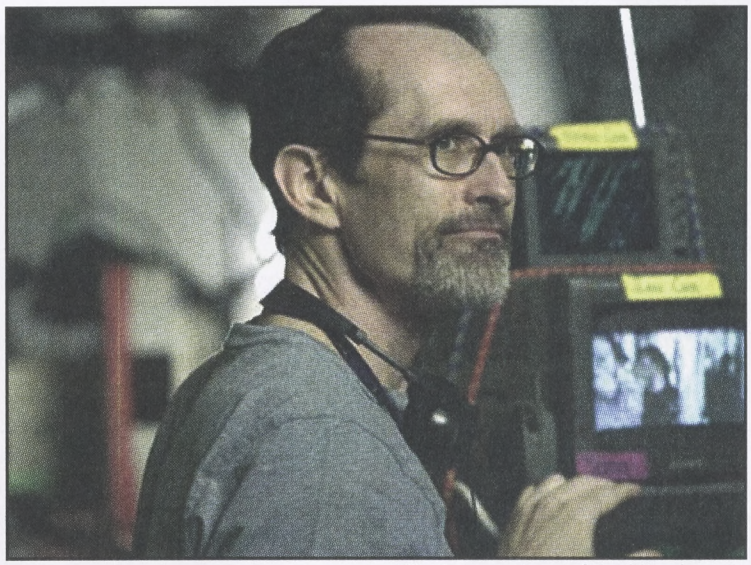
Twohy decided to pursue filmmaking while attending Cal State Long Beach, where he was a theater arts major. After a couple of students from the film department cast him as an actor in their movie, he changed his major to film.

"They didn't have much of a script," Twohy said. "They had an outline of what their story was, but they had no dialogue, so they asked me to write the dialogue. They figured since I was the actor, I was somehow closer to the dialogue than they were, and I did that, and I sort of liked it."

After graduation, Twohy worked as a bartender for six years while writing screenplays and submitting them to various studios. By the late '80s, he was able to sell one of his scripts, a horror story titled "Warlock," to New World

Pictures. At around the same time, 20th Century Fox hired him to write a script for "Alien 3," but his screenplay ended up being one of the many rejected story treatments.

Still, "Warlock" became a minor success, and it led to Twohy writing the script for "The Fugitive" after meeting Arnold Kopelson, one of the producers of "Warlock." Kopelson had recently acquired the rights to a couple of old television shows, including "The Fugitive."



Photos courtesy of davidtwohy.com

"At the time, he didn't really know what he had because I saw in it this retelling of 'Les Misérables.' Richard Kimble [Harrison Ford's character] was Jean Valjean, and Marshal Gerard [Tommy Lee Jones' character] was Inspector Javert," Twohy said. "There were all these great classic things that could be, so I had to sort of open the producer's eyes to what he had, to tell him how good it could be. He was sort of impressed by that, so he hired me to write the script."

After "The Fugitive" became a huge hit upon its release in the summer of 1993, Twohy got the opportunity to work on scripts for other big-budget projects, including the skydiving caper "Terminal Velocity," the Demi Moore-goes-gung-ho vehicle "G.I. Jane" and Kevin Costner's how-to-guide-to-spending-$175-million-on-stuff-that-goes-boom-onscreen "Waterworld."

Eventually, producers asked him to rewrite the sci-fi script "Pitch Black" by adding better-developed characters, and Twohy answered the call by penning characters such as the main character, Riddick, a conflicted criminal played in the film by Vin Diesel. Twohy also got to direct the film in accordance with the producers' deal that he would be allowed to take over the director's chair if he could make the script appealing enough to be financed.

"My approach was, 'Look, just because it's a science fiction film doesn't mean you can't have interesting characters that have arcs and secrets,' so all those things you normally do in a drama I was trying to do in a science fiction and action setting," Twohy said.

"Pitch Black" became a minor hit in 2000 and established Diesel as a rising star. It even spawned a sequel, 2004's "The Chronicles of Riddick."

Twohy shows no signs of slowing down career-wise: He is currently writing the screenplay to "The Brazilian Job," the sequel to the 2003 hit "The Italian Job."

Twohy is also working on "A Perfect Getaway," a modest-budget thriller that he plans to direct.

As for advice for young filmmakers looking to establish themselves after graduation, Twohy has some pragmatic words of wisdom: Get an agent.

"If you have a film to show, use the film to get an agent. If you have a script to show, a full-length screenplay, use that to secure an agent," he said. "As soon as they think they will make money off of you, you will have an agent. If you're going to show them a commercial screenplay, make sure it's a commercial screenplay. If it's a movie, hopefully there's something commercial in that movie that allows them to help sell you to the guys with money."

Check out exclusive interviews and videos at www.digmagonline.com

Going live on December 17:

Las Vegas' The Cab is the newest band to join Panic! At The Disco, Paramore and Gym Class Heroes on Decaydance Records. See what the guys had to say about their debut record.

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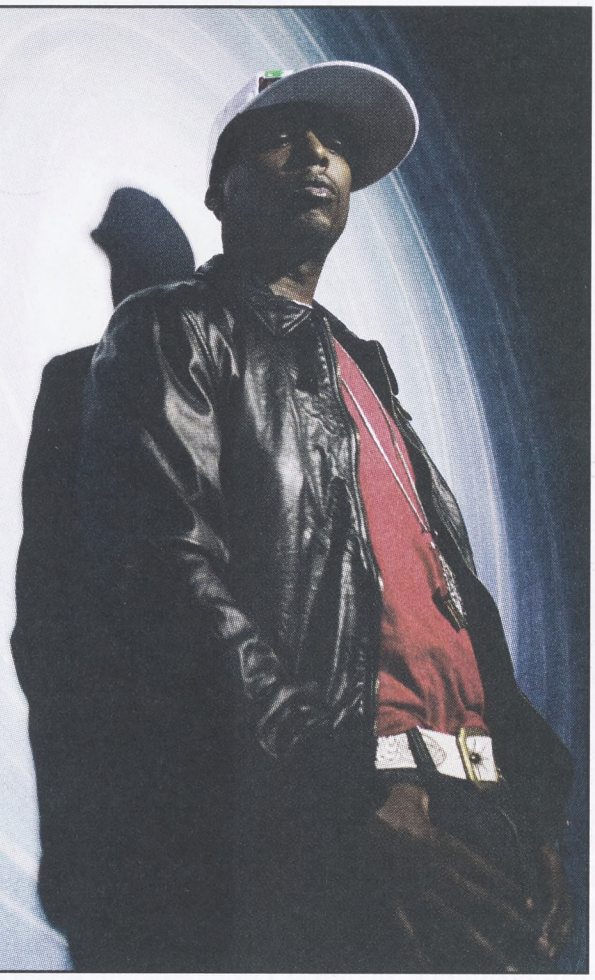
Turning coal into diamonds



From freestying after school in the park to gracing sold-out stages with Justin Timberlake and Kayne West, Talib Kweli is doing his best to prove that hip-hop is more than the "mindless rap" you hear on the radio.

By Dale Johnson

Hip-hop icon Talib Kweli only wants one thing from you: to listen.

Take the lyrics from the track "Listen!!!" on his 2007 release "Eardrum," for example: "Ladies and gentlemen, get ready, here it come. Listen! Talib Kweli and I'm bangin' on your eardrum."

Kweli's goal is clear: to reach out to the masses and show the intelligent side of hip-hop, a genre of music that is consistently categorized as mindless and pointless.

"Hip-hop is a vehicle," Kweli told *DIG* while he was on tour in Southern California. "It's a tool and it's one of the best ones we have to help people become culturally aware and to give people a way to express themselves."

Kweli hasn't known much other than the hip-hop lifestyle. Growing up in Brooklyn, N.Y., in the mid '70s, hip-hop has been a part of his life since he has been conscious. From a young age, Kweli had an affinity for creative outlets such as acting and poetry, so a move to hip-hop was a natural progression for him.

Kweli got his first taste for performing hip-hop in high school, when he and his friends would entertain each other by freestyling. This after-school activity soon took a more serious tone as the friends moved out to the greater New York area to pursue their passion.

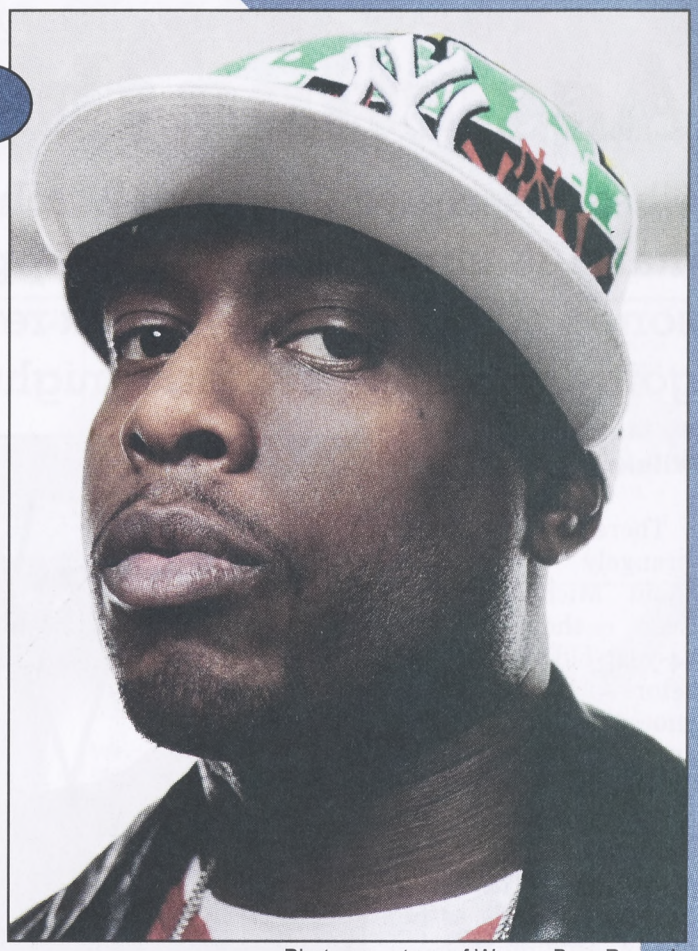
"I was part of a crew, a group of lyricists who freestyled and performed in Washington Square Park," Kweli said. "We would be out there everyday just rapping, and that transferred to us playing some of these small, underground New York clubs."

Soon, Kweli and his crew were creating a buzz across the nation that was as far-reaching as Los Angeles.

"We flew out to Los Angeles. I had a record out called 'Fortified Live' and I knew that my friends and the people around me knew the record, but to fly 3,000 miles to California and perform in L.A. and have people be familiar with the record in the crowd, that was a defining moment for me," Kweli said.

During his emergence into the New York hip-hop scene, Talib Kweli became good friends with fellow MC Mos Def. In 1998, under the name Black Star, the duo released their debut to vast critical acclaim. Today this self-titled LP is considered to be one of the best hip-hop records of all time.

Kweli followed up Black Star with another collaboration, this time with prolific producer/DJ Hi-Tek. In 2000 the duo, under the name Reflection Eternal, released their debut album, "Train Of Thought." Again, Kweli's work reached massive critical acclaim for its imaginative lyrics and unparalleled style, but mainstream success didn't coincide with the positive



> "It's a tool and it's one of the best ones we have to help people become culturally aware and to give people a way to express themselves."
>
> - Talib Kweli
> on hip-hop

Photos courtesy of Warner Bros Records

reaction of critics.

While Kweli wasn't seeing his albums soar commercially, he was still experiencing success as a hip-hop artist.

"There used to be a time when that type of rap – the more mindless rap – was selling all the records and rap like mine wasn't selling any records," Kweli said. "But that's not the reality anymore. The reality is quality artists, regardless of what genre they are and what type of hip-hop they are making, if your shit is quality, it sells."

Kweli took this same mentality into the solo game. 2002 marked the release of Kweli's solo debut, "Quality." The title indicated how the album sounded. Kweli got his first taste of mainstream crossover success with the Kanye West-produced track "Get By."

Kweli followed up "Quality" with his second solo release on Rawkus Records, 2004's "The Beautiful Struggle." Similar critical praise followed the release of "Struggle."

Extensive touring followed the release of "Struggle," with Kweli continuing to create a buzz across the nation with his unique brand of hip-hop. When it came to beginning his third solo album, Kweli had more ambitious plans.

He first sought out the strongest producers in the game to provide him with a backdrop to create his lyrical assault. West, Black Eyed Peas front man will.i.am. and Hi-Tek all provided beats for the album.

"I chose producers for the new record who really love hip-hop and are concerned with the aesthetic of it," Kweli said. "And most of the producers have proven themselves in that sense."

Kweli also expanded his repertoire in terms of collaborations on "Eardrum," teaming up with the likes of Justin Timberlake as well as Norah Jones.

"Eardrum" was released in August 2007, and debuted at No. 2 on the *Billboard* charts, making it Kweli's highest-charting album to date. Like all of his previous works, "Eardrum" was greeted with much critical acclaim, but seemingly always humble, Kweli was quick to attribute the success of the album to his collaborators as well.

"Even on my solo albums, they are not truly solo albums," he said. "It's my name on it, but there are a lot of people involved in helping me to create it."

With each critically acclaimed album, pressure seems to mount on the back of Kweli, but just as smooth as his flows, Kweli plays off the pressure that goes along with topping each previous album.

"There is pressure, but its all good pressure," Kweli said. "The way you have to flip any kind of pressure is just to be better. And you can be as good as you want...A lot of pressure on coal creates a diamond, and that's what I try and let the pressure do."

Assisting the dark knight

Chances are you've seen **Michael Caine** in one of his more than 100 film and television appearances. Read what the seasoned actor has to say about revisiting "Sleuth," what's going on with "The Dark Knight" and how to approach comedy.

By Matthew Wilkinson

Photos courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics

There is something strangely debonair about Michael Caine. Even though the 74-year-old British actor looks nice enough to be anybody's grandpa, when he sits back relaxed in his chair with his shirt slightly unbuttoned and his arms crossed he looks as smart and sly as he did as "Alfie" in 1966.

But Caine should sit with confidence with the resume he has built. Since making his first credited film appearance in "A Hill in Korea" in 1956, Caine has made a name for himself by starring in films like "The Ipcress File," "Gambit" and the original "The Italian Job." He has been nominated for six Academy Awards, and won two of them. He was even knighted by the Queen of England.

Even in his older age, Caine continues to draw starring roles opposite Hollywood's hottest stars. This year, he returned to familiar territory by starring in Kenneth Branaugh's remake of "Sleuth," playing the role opposite of the one he played in the 1972 original. He also returned to his role as Alfred Pennyworth, Batman's caretaker and butler, which he made his own in 2005's "Batman Begins."

Q: What was it like revisiting "Sleuth" for you?

A: Well, it never felt like revisiting it because there aren't any lines from the original movie in it. All that happened was Jude [Law] took the stageplay to Harold [Pinter] and said "Would you write a screenplay from this stageplay?" Harold had never seen the play or the movie. He read it and said to Jude, "There's a great plot there." So he took the plot and wrote his own screenplay. None of the lines are the same, so it wasn't really remaking it for me.

Q: How do you deal with awkward actors?

A: I found very early on that if you stay with your character, you're bulletproof. No other actor can shoot you down. If they mess about and do stupid things on the take, you just stay in character and they're the ones that look silly.

Q: How do you prepare for a comedy like "Austin Powers" versus a drama like "The Cider House Rules?"

A: It's all the same thing. If you do comedy, no matter how broad it is, you have to be real. It doesn't alter at all. The old actor who was dying said "Dying is easy, comedy is hard." It's a cliché, and the reason it's a cliché is because it's absolutely true. Comedy is terribly difficult to do.

Q: Were you a Batman fan before the films?

A: Oh yeah. I've seen all of the Batman [movies]. I think by a long way Christian Bale is the best Batman I've seen. He's certainly the best actor. He's an incredible actor.

Q: What's going on with "The Dark Knight?"

A: I'm the butler in "The Dark Knight." I was the butler in the first one, "Batman Begins," which I thought was the best Batman ever. This one will be better. The big surprise out of this will be what we thought was a big problem, The Joker. There you got the shadow of Jack Nicholson looming over you, which was an incredible performance. We got Heath Ledger, who's gone in a completely and terrifying different direction. He will be the big surprise. He will frighten the life out of you. He did me the first time I saw him.

DECEMBER

Your guide to concerts, on campus events and local happenings

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Motion City Soundtrack			28	29	30	1 Men's Volleyball Asics Fall Classic, @ The Pyramid, All Day Paul Williams, @ The Carpenter Center, 8 p.m. $50
2 CSULB Art Dept. Holiday Sale, @ The Student Art Galleries, All Day Dave Gerhart & Axel Clarke, @ Gerald Daniel Recital Hall, 4 p.m. $10/$7	3 Motion City Soundtrack, @ House of Blues Anaheim, 5:30 p.m., $20	4 The Bennewitz Quartet, @ Gerald Daniel Recital Hall, 8 p.m.	5 The beginning of Hanukkah	6 Dean Regan, @ The Carpenter Center, Show and Dinner Event, 7 p.m. $59-$75 Wind Symphony, @ Gerald Daniel Recital Hall, 8 p.m. $10/$7	7 Women's Basketball vs. Fresno, @ The Pyramid, 7 p.m. University Symphony Orchestra, @ The Carpenter Center, 8 p.m. $10/$7	8 Caribbean Christmas, @ The Carpenter Center, 2 & 8 p.m., $15/$10
9 Women's Basketball vs. Arizona, @ The Pyramid 2 p.m. Dane Cook, @ Honda Center, 7:00 p.m., $100/$30	10 Symphonic Band and Concert Band, @ Gerald Daniel Recital Hall, 8 p.m., $10/$7 Hawthorne Heights, @ House of Blues Anaheim, 6 p.m. $20	11 Percussion Ensemble, @ Gerald Daniel Recital Hall, 8 p.m. $10/$7 Sullivan, @ Chain Reaction, 7:30 p.m., $10 Social Distortion, @ House of Blues Anaheim, 7:30 p.m., $27.50	12 Velvet Revolver & Alice In Chains, @ The Gibson Amphitheatre, SOLD OUT Bjork, @ Nokia Theatre L.A. Live, 8:15 p.m., $125/$35	Hawthorne Heights		15 Women's Basketball vs. Nebraska, @ The Pyramid 5 p.m. Fall 2007 Student Film Showcase, Venue unannounced, 7:30 p.m.
Sugarcult		18 Men's Basketball vs. San Francisco, @ The Pyramid, 7:05 p.m. Van Halen, @ Honda Center, Dec. 18 and 20, 7:30 p.m., $149.50/$49.50	19	20 Sugarcult, @ House of Blues Anaheim, 7 p.m., $23	21 Women's Basketball vs. Washington State, @ The Pyramid 7 p.m.	22 Shiny Toy Guns, @ The Wiltern, 9 p.m., $19
23	24	25 Merry Christmas	26 The beginning of Kwanzaa	27	28 Nekromantix, @ The Glass House, 7 p.m., $17	29 Women's Basketball vs. Utah, @ The Pyramid, 2 p.m.
30	31 Happy New Years					

Fighting the good fight

With the desire for respect on his mind and the desire for freedom in his heart, Queens of the Stone Age singer and guitarist Josh Homme takes the stage every night ready to jam, and to fight for gimmickless rock bands everywhere.

By Matthew Wilkinson

Josh Homme does not look like somebody who would front a band with "Queens" in the name. He stands at a swanky 6' 5," wears sunglasses indoors, bites on an unlit cigarette out of nervous habit and has red hair the color of fire. He is a picturesque rock star.

But there is a lot more to the 34-year-old than meets the eye. He is a family man (he brought his father to our interview), he sucks at the video game "Guitar Hero" (even when playing his own songs), he is well-spoken and a fan of imagery and metaphors, and he admits to being star struck when working with ZZ Top guitarist Billy Gibbons. Maybe he isn't your traditional rock star.

His band, Queens of the Stone Age, might not sound familiar to you, but if you've ever listened to KROQ, played "Guitar Hero" or watched TV shows like "CSI: NY," "Entourage" or "Wildboyz," chances are you've heard its music. The band is known for its gimmickless rock music that gets crowds going crazy, but the band members weren't always the master musicians that they are today.

Homme started playing guitar when he was nine. He took lessons, but quit because he hated practicing. Growing up in the boring city of Palm Desert near Palm Springs, Homme had to "make his own fun."

At age 15, he joined up with local band Kyuss on lead guitar. The members of Kyuss were known to drive to isolated parts of the desert, plug into generators and rock out to the desolate landscape. The band became a cult favorite, but disbanded in 1995. After toying with the idea of going to college, Homme started Queens of the Stone Age in 1997 and used his own money to finance the band's self-titled debut record.

"I was feeling like I wanted to sound as individual as possible," Homme said when reminiscing about that first record. "Instead of fitting into somebody else's box, I wanted to destroy every box around me. I wanted to surprise people. I wanted people in five seconds to know who they're listening to, and that's still the goal. Nothing has changed."

The record was well-received by both fans and critics, and it was enough to score the band a deal with Interscope Records. Queens' debut record for Interscope, 2000's "Rated R," was highly praised by critics but did not sell very well. However, it landed the band opening slots for the Foo Fighters and Hole, as well as a spot on Ozzfest.

Queens of the Stone Age made a fan out of Foo Fighters front man and former Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl. When Queens' drummer Gene Trautmann left

“Music is a pleasure device for a way of explaining what words don’t explain very well. It’s the best way I know to communicate.”
-Josh Homme

Photos courtesy of Interscope Records

the band to work on other projects, Grohl was so eager to contribute to the recording of the next Queens of the Stone Age album that he put the Foo Fighters' next record on hold. Grohl recorded drums for 2002's "Songs for the Deaf," and even went on tour with the band for a few months before returning to the Foo Fighters. Grohl is just one of the more than 20 musicians who have contributed to and left Queens of the Stone Age.

"I lost the ability to be with the same four people, like U2, years ago," Homme said. "I think you play with the best people available to you. Sometimes they can't stay, and sometimes you grow apart. Both of those things are OK. Sometimes too much allegiance gets paid to people. Music is an art. If you have a relationship with someone in an art, it's never going to last. I don't want safety, I want danger and creativity and positive friction."

"Songs for the Deaf" ended up being Queens' most popular record to date, selling almost a million copies and spawning the MTV singles "No One Knows" and "Go With The Flow." It even earned the band two Grammy nominations.

Queens followed up with "Lullabies to Paralyze" in 2005. It debuted at No. 5 on the *Billboard* charts, the band's highest debut to date. It didn't sell as well as "Songs for the Deaf," though, moving a little more than 340,000 copies. Then, on Valentine's Day 2007, the band's web site announced a new album called "Era Vulgaris."

"It's a hip swinging record," Homme said of his band's most recent release. "I think it's a record that will surprise people who are into Queens. It's got that Queens thing that sounds strangely familiar for a bunch of new songs. Some people believe that our records are all over the map, but they're not to me. It's just my taste. I like Elvis and I like Slayer. I like Roy Orbison and I like Black Flag. I like Bjork and I like Tom Waits. The goal is to play whatever sounds good."

"Era Vulgaris" hit stores in June. Tracks like "Sick, Sick, Sick" and "3's and 7's" have been getting regular airplay, and the band is back on the road touring the world.

Homme married punk rock singer Brody Dalle, best known as front woman of defunct punk outfit The Distillers. The two have a child together named Camille. When I asked Homme what his biggest accomplishment has been, he said, "My daughter, because I finally have something I love more than music."

Queens of the Stone Age are heading over to Europe after the new year, and are continuing to write music in the process. Homme is uncertain what the future will bring after that, but he is certain about the one thing that keeps him going.

"Freedom, man," Homme said with a smile. "To build walls around a castle worth being inside. I want to pursue art. I want to fight the good fight. Music is a pleasure device for a way of explaining what words don't explain very well. It's the best way I know to communicate. One of the best things in life is to feel understood, and music has a way of conveying and understanding. And there's no wrong way to make it. That's what attracted me so much to it, was the freedom."

War torn city united

Berlin is a beautiful city with lots of art, culture and tourist destinations. Read about one student's trip there, and her experiences.

By Daniela Gutierrez

Photos by Daniela Gutierrez

Sanssouci Park, Potsdam

It was a cold Sunday at the Berlin airport and I was waiting for Anika Wedemeyer. We met while she was studying here at Cal State Long Beach two years ago. When I finally got the chance to travel to Europe, of course I had to visit her.

It looked like it was about to rain so we hurried to catch the train. It rains a lot in northern Germany, but Berlin is one of those must-visit cities.

Apart from the tremendous mix of contemporary and ancient history, Berlin is one of the most active and vibrant cities I've been to.

The city is a blooming art center, with new galleries popping up everywhere. Even the Berlin Wall works as an open, empty canvas. Among these centers of art is the remarkable Museumsinselm, a cluster of museums in an island in the middle of the Spree River.

Berlin is one of those rare cities that has something for everyone. If you are in your late 50s and want to see classic art, enjoy refined cuisine and study the deep historical background of Germany, you can do it in Berlin. If you are a college student craving exciting nightlife, new art forms and urban beauty, Berlin has that too.

A friend recommended the "Famous Free Tour." This three-hour tips-based expedition went to the main sightseeing spots by foot or bike. The English-speaking guides were mostly American or Australian students. In an almost annoying but energetic way, they summarized the history of the city and showed some rare spots such as where Hitler killed himself, which is now just a green area. It was a good introduction to the city that covered the basics and gave a better sense of location so you could do your own exploration later.

One of those essential places was the Berlin Wall, parts of which are still standing. The triumphal Brandenburg Gate used to be Berlin's main entrance and one of the major icons of the wall's division of the city. From Napoleon to Bill Clinton to David Hasselhoff to CSULB students, historical figures and regular people alike have walked through this Greek-inspired monument.

Yet not all of the remains of the wall are so extravagant. In different neighborhoods, it takes different shapes. Near the former SS headquarters, it's all wired up and you can't even touch it. By the Spree River it becomes an open-air gallery. On both sides there are complete art works with historic messages about the symbolism of the wall, abstract graffiti, and even just a bunch of tourist-written messages like "We were here, summer '05" in dozens of languages.

The city is full of paradoxes. There is a great modern urban sense that goes hand-in-hand with

Berliner Dom, Museum Island

The Brandenburg Gate

> "Whether it's for its incomparable artistic tone, or for its immense historic weight, or simply for its beauty, Berlin is a must."

its developing art and dynamic nightlife. There is also a more traditional art scene with several classic museums. Beyond its artistic side, Berlin has also a tragic past.

In 2005, the Holocaust Memorial opened as a controversial monument and museum that focuses on the Holocaust's victims as individuals. There are 2,700 concrete slabs, each of a different size and length symbolizing how each life lost in the Holocaust was unique. There are also several memorials for the victims of communism all over.

Another notorious example of Berlin's paradoxes is the Berliner Dom. The exuberant neo-Renaissance cathedral was heavily damaged during World War II. A couple of blocks behind it is Alexanderplatz, the square home of the famous Soviet television antenna. The gray receiver is a symbol of Berlin's division, the communist invasion and the constant competition with the West.

Berlin has become a distinct urban melting pot thanks to many immigrants who have brought their food and culture to the city. And, in accordance with any big metropolis, its transportation system is also efficient, clean and safe, although not economical.

An excellent way of taking advantage of the trains is going to Potsdam, a former East German town. Now it's an easy to get around college town that has a very Jane Austen-esque look with gorgeous gardens and palaces. Cecilienhof, one of the palaces there, was where the conference which determined the future of the defeated Nazi Germany at the end of World War II was held.

Restaurants, pubs, clubs, cafes and expositions filled the streets. Some of the galleries become bars at night. If it wasn't for Anika, I wouldn't have discovered one of my favorite places, Tacheles, a beat-up building covered in paint where painters worked and sold their art on every floor. At night, music and drinks changed the patio's atmosphere.

Whether it's for its incomparable artistic tone, or for its immense historic weight, or simply for its beauty, Berlin is a must. One could just sit outside in one of the many cafes and smoke, chat and drink for hours while the city's fast rhythm continues unaltered. Most European cities share a similar duality, a mix of old and new, tragedy and magnificence. Yet each one has a distinctive way of transforming into the modern metropolis it is now. The way Berlin did it turned out to be exceptional.

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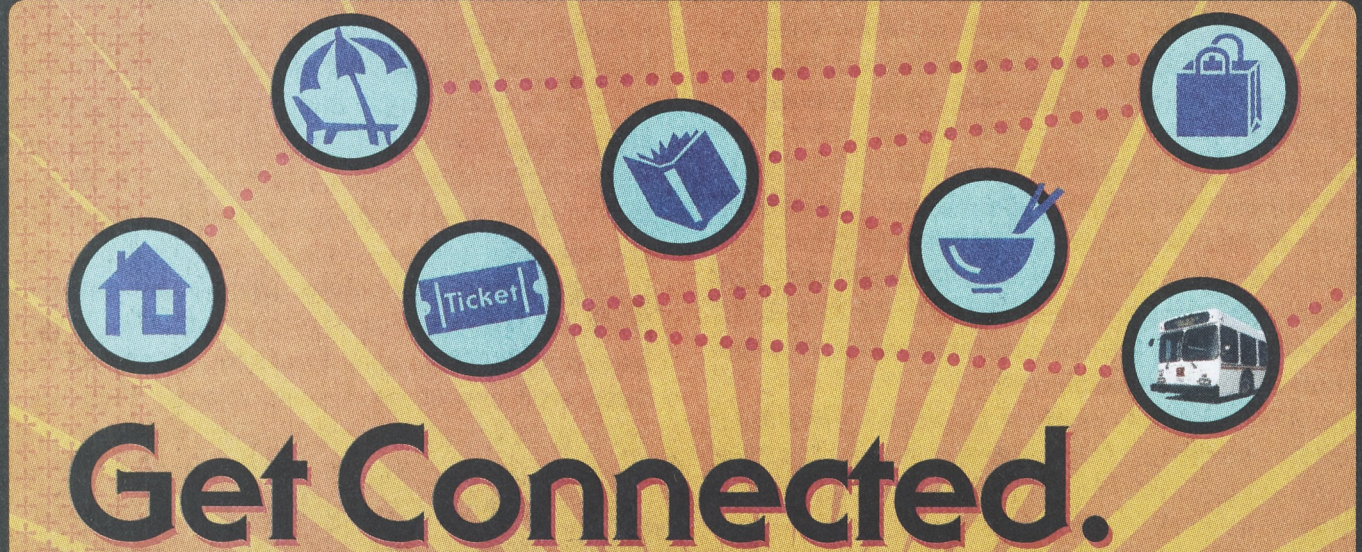

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